

## The Citrus Tower

The car door opens and you are overcome with the annoying, all too familiar 'dinging' sound that normally announces your departure; however today it announces the onset of an adventure. As I climbed out of the red sedan that my grandfather drove on this cool December day my eyes are immediately filled with the breathtaking view of Central Florida's tallest free standing structure sitting atop one of the tallest hills in Central Florida, the Citrus Tower. As you make your way up towards the inviting entrance to this historical landmark you can already feel the butterflies overwhelming you. It's not that you haven't seen this tower before, in fact you see it almost every day, but today is the first time that you are actually going up into the tower.

Walking into the gift shop you are immediately greeted by the smell of pine and the glistening ornaments that decorate the trees lining the walls. The quaint little shop that is the focus of the room is filled with the hustle and bustle of people searching for the perfect gift. There are men, women and children all joined in the mayhem. Upon what seemed to be our second step into this magical building, we were greeted by the friendly voice of Ms. Suzie the tower owner. We pushed our way up to the counter, past the many gifts and through the tangled mess of people. We purchased two tickets and were shown the way back into the bowels of the building, to where a beautifully decorated elevator awaited us.

Into the elevator we went, taking in the pleasantly surprising smell of cider presumably from the tacky car air freshener hanging from the ceiling. We pushed in our

solitary button choice of the top floor, and were jolted by the engaging of the wires that would faithfully take us to our destination. Holding my hand my grandfather told me that as soon as we reached the top he had a special surprise. It seemed that we were in this elevator for an eternity with every second passing by like an hour, as the machine labored in hoisting us to the top.

Finally the elevator stopped with a thud and the doors slid open with a hiss. We were greeted with a room that was delightfully decorated in greens and reds that ushered in a feeling of complete peace. However past all of the decorations and through all of the hues beheld a sight that was as awe-inspiring as anything that I could have ever imagined. Before my eyes lay a sight that not even Picasso could have captured! As we approached the window I became uneasy as I realized that besides the floor there was nothing standing beneath us. However that feeling was quenched by the reassuring touch of my grandfather's hand on my shoulder. He leaned down and out of his pocket brought out some salt water taffy telling me that this was his surprise. He shared with me that this had become a tradition among his family, bringing his grandson up the tower and sharing with him a piece of this delectable candy.

As my eyes came into focus the view stretched on for literally as far as my young eyes could see. To my right out of the elevator was the glistening skyline of Orlando, to my left was the shining surface of Lake Minneola. My grandfather explained to me that the view hasn't always been as it is. He said that the reason for the tower being named as it is was because of the spectacle of orange groves that it once boasted so proudly. Now however it beheld the sight of urbanization. For as far as the eyes

can see it now showed rows of houses stretching for miles. My grandfather told me that sadly this effect was not a onetime incidence however an ever-continuing process that will only grow in its intensity.

Our day concluded with a sunset that was unsurpassed by any other. My grandfather and I with a promise to return disembarked on the reciprocal of the journey that earlier this day had been so very exciting. We went back down the elevator, out through the lobby and then swiftly back out to the car where we were once again invited by that all too familiar sound. Over all today was a day that will forever live on in memory.

Garrett M. - Age 14